

1 December 2000

**UNICE STATEMENT TO EU SUMMIT:
EUROPE CANNOT AFFORD FAILURE IN NICE**

The Council of Presidents of UNICE – comprising the Presidents of all 34 member federations - met today in Paris and adopted a statement expressing the priorities of European business for the European Council Summit in Nice. "Europe's future lies in increasing the competitiveness of European enterprises and developing new markets in an enlarged European Union", stressed President Jacobs.

1. Implement the economic and structural reforms decided at the Lisbon Summit

The Lisbon Summit set as its objective that Europe should become the most competitive economic area in the world and see employment rise to more than 70% of the workforce. Good intentions at European level have not yet been translated into practice in Member States. It is essential that the new social agenda does not turn the clock back on badly needed economic and social reforms. In the absence of real reforms, the euro is likely to remain undervalued. The credibility of Europe is at stake.

2. Keep enlargement on track and conclude the IGC

Enlargement is one of the most important challenges and responsibilities facing the Union. UNICE urges the EU to make progress by developing clear positions on all aspects of the negotiations, and the candidate countries to accelerate work to align their legislation and practices on the *acquis communautaire*.

Institutional reform of the EU is an absolute precondition for successful enlargement. Reaching agreement in Nice on all the points on the agenda of the IGC is essential. In particular, UNICE supports a selective extension of QMV to some important issues for business including international negotiations and agreements on services, intellectual property rights and foreign direct investment and, on a case-by-case basis, implementation and simplification of adopted framework tax measures. Failure to break the current impasse on extension of QMV to some or all of these issues will inevitably lead to alternative and more flexible arrangements among groups of Member States, possibly outside the Treaty framework. This scenario could undermine the functioning of the single market and create new barriers to trade or distortions of competition; it is not, therefore, a solution which business can support.

3. Establish a judicial framework for the Community Patent

Member States agreed in Lisbon to ensure adoption of a Community patent by 2001. The lack of such an instrument is standing in the way of stronger competitiveness and innovation in Europe and UNICE strongly supports the Commission proposal. An integrated specialised court is key to the success of the proposed instrument. A Treaty change is necessary for creation of such a court and the Commission has asked Member States to approve such a change at the Nice Summit. UNICE's Council of Presidents urges Member States to ensure that their Lisbon declarations will be implemented and that they do not miss this golden opportunity to allow rapid progress by approving the necessary Treaty change.

4. Charter of Fundamental Rights

UNICE supports the objective of establishing a Charter of Fundamental Rights making those rights and freedoms which are generally considered to be fundamental and inalienable more visible to the Union's citizens. However, the Charter should respect present competences of the EU and not extend existing powers. UNICE regrets that the text of the Charter remains ambiguous in some articles on economic and social rights. The proposed Charter is not fit to become legally binding.

"EU Member States must show leadership and action if Europe is to achieve these objectives. The European business community strongly calls on the European Council to make the Nice Summit a success", UNICE's President concluded.